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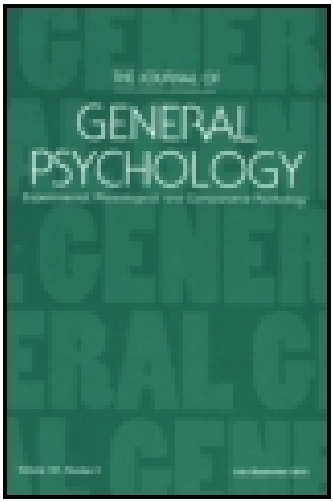

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SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOME PERSONALITY VARIABLES*

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A. PROBLEM

The general thesis that there exists a close relationship between an individual's class position and his personality has been accepted by most sociologists (e.g., 9, 16). There is need, however, to supplement this view with more detailed studies indicating exactly how the two complexes of variables, personality and social class, are related in any particular society.

In a study similar to our own, Klett (10) divided high school students into six classes on the basis of the occupation of the father, and found that only two of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule variables, autonomy and dominance, were significantly related to socio-economic status. He concluded that "the effect of socio-economic status on the EPPS variables failed to establish that this variable was profoundly related to the scores" (4, p. 70). The present study attempts to investigate with a different measure of social class the same relationship; i.e., whether some particular needs or traits are more likely to be stressed in some social classes than in others.

B. INSTRUMENTS

There are various methods of measuring social class which have been developed by different authors; e.g., Centers (2); Warner (16); Finch and Hoehn (5); North-Hatt (12); and Hollingshead-Redlich (9). Gordon reviewed a number of these methods and found that "with the exception of self-identification as to class, all the indices of stratification correlated substantially and positively with each other" (6, p. 144). The instrument employed in the present study is the two factor Index of Status Position devised by Hollingshead and Redlich (9). In their book, *Social Class and Mental Illness*, they discuss an index based on residence area, occupation and education, describing its reliability and validity. Myers and Roberts (11) mention that scores based on two of the factors, occupation and education, correlate .97 with the three factor index. Because it is a convenient instru-

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ment, and because it correlates so well with the validity criterion, the two factor index was the instrument chosen to measure social class in this study.

There are many theories of personality (7) with at least as many modes of assessing it (1). In this study the theory and mode of assessment developed by Edwards (3) is used. His mode of assessment, the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (hereafter called the EPPS) attempts to measure the strength of 15 manifest needs in a forced choice type of test, holding the variable of social desirability constant.

C. Procedure

The sample was chosen from the entire sophomore classes from high schools in two communities of 11 and 12 thousand population in northeastern Ohio—Kent and Ravenna. Both communities are centers for small manufacturing plants, one being the county seat and the other the site of a state university. Kent tends to have more upper class persons than Ravenna as evidenced, for example, by the fact that for Class I only two out of the 16 *S*s were from Ravenna and for Class V only two of the 14 used were from Kent. The sophomore classes in these cities were used because other studies (e.g., 8, 15) have shown that many lower class individuals tend to drop out of school after their sophomore year. Further, three assumptions seemed tenable: (*a*) that sophomore students have personalities that are sufficiently stable to be measured; (*b*) that sophomore students are in the same social class as their parents; and (*c*) that the communities from which these subjects came were sufficiently similar to the New Haven community to warrant using the Hollingshead-Redlich procedures.

All *S*s completed the Social Class Data Sheet and the EPPS in a large room or auditorium at one sitting. They were told that this investigation was part of a larger study, and assurances were given by the investigators and the principals of the schools that their scores would be used only for this study.

Of the original 253 sophomores who participated in the study, four were dropped because they were negro, 35 were eliminated because their consistency scores on the EPPS were too low, and four were not used because of incomplete or unreliable Social Class Data Sheets, leaving a total of 210 *S*s. An additional 32 *S*s were dropped to make the number of males and females proportionate in each of the five social classes, as is necessary for the analysis of variance. There remained 16 *S*s in Class I, 22 in Class II, 70 in Class III, 56 in Class IV, and 14 in Class V.

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D. Results

As shown in Table 1, three traits, affiliation (to form strong personal attachments), dominance (to want to persuade and influence others to do what one wants), and nurturance (to want to assist others less fortunate), were significant with respect to social class. Affiliation and dominance were significant at the .05 level of confidence and nurturance was significant at the .01 level. The *t*-tests run between pairs of classes for the three traits showed the following results: (*a*) Class I scored significantly lower than Classes II, III, and IV on affiliation; (*b*) Class I scored significantly higher on dominance than Classes IV and V; and (*c*) Class I scored significantly lower on nurturance than each of the other classes.

For 12 of the 15 traits there was a statistically significant F for sex differences. Only for deference (to follow the lead of others), order (to be neat and organized), and exhibition (to want to be the center of attention) were there no statistically significant sex differences.

TABLE 1
Results of Analysis of Variance for Each EPPS Variable

Variable	Social class	Sex	Interaction
Achievement			
Deference			
Order			
Exhibition			
Autonomy		.01	.01
Affiliation	.05	.01	
Intraception		.01	
Succorance		.01	
Dominance	.05	.01	
Abasement		.01	
Nurturance	.01	.01	
Change		.01	
Endurance		.01	
Heterosexuality		.05	
Aggression		.01	.05

For two of the fifteen traits, autonomy (to want to be independent of others in making decisions) and aggression (to be ready to injure others), there was a statistically significant F for interaction, i.e., a special effect of specific combinations of class, sex and trait. *t*-tests were run between males and females for each class, and between classes, holding sex constant, for each of these traits. The results for aggression may be summarized in the following statements: (*a*) social classes in general are not different from each other; (*b*) Class V males are significantly lower on aggression than males from

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Classes III and IV, but Class V females are significantly higher on this trait than are the females from each of the other classes; and (*c*) while males in general tend to be more aggressive than the females in the same class, only in Classes III and IV are these differences statistically significant, with the exception that in Class V females are more aggressive than males.

The findings for autonomy may be summarized in the following statements: (*a*) social classes are not different from one another in autonomy; (*b*) Class III males score significantly higher than males in Classes II and IV; (*c*) Class I females score significantly higher than the females in Classes II, and III and IV, and Class III females score significantly lower than females in Class IV; (*d*) males tend to be more autonomous than females except in Class I where females are more autonomous, although not significantly so; and (*e*) sex differences are significant only in Classes III and V where males are more autonomous.

Bartlett's test for homogeneity of variance was run for each trait and found to be non-significant, permitting the analysis of variance.

E. Discussion

There were three personality traits—dominance, affiliation, and nurturance —which were found to be statistically significant both with respect to social class and sex.

The difference in favor of higher scores for males for dominance is not unanticipated in our society, although these differences are only statistically significant in Classes III and IV. Class I tends to have higher scores in dominance than any of the other classes (although this is significant only when compared with Classes IV and V), and there is a tendency toward lower scores to be associated with lower class status. This is consistent with the data from Hollingshead and Redlich (9, p. 85), with Hollingshead's *Elmtown's Youth* (8, p. 287) and Warner's *Jonesville* (15). Dominance was also found to be discriminating among the classes in Klett's study (10).

Females tended to be higher on affiliation than males in general and within the classes, although within classes the differences reach statistical significance only for Classes III and IV. This seems congruent with the general tendency in our society for females, and particularly for the more mobile middle class females. In our society females are generally expected to make and maintain friendly contacts with others, and are reared to be less independent than males. The significant difference between Class I members, and members of Classes II, III, and IV may reflect the relative emancipation of Class I persons from a need to maintain strong attachments or to be openly friendly

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with others. Perhaps Class I persons are and can afford to be more exclusive in their social attachments.

Class V individuals seem to lie somewhere between Class I persons and the other classes. It is not surprising to find that Class V members are generally not as friendly as those in the three social classes directly above, since the people in this class are often considered to be isolates and hostile members of society (9). Because he is held in low esteem by others, a member of Class V may compensate by hostility, suspicion, and isolation, and thus appear to have less need for affiliation than members of the middle class. In *Elmtown's Youth* Hollingshead (8) speaks of Class V children being less acceptable as friends and Warner speaks of Class V persons in this way too (15, p. 82). In addition, Class V persons tend to live in an extended family setup. Perhaps because of the indifference or rejection of the rest of the society, combined with the fact that there is an abundance of relatives who are dependent upon one another, there may tend to develop a clannishness, with its consequent suspicion and coldness to outsiders.

That males tend to score lower on nurturance than females is not surprising in our society, although the differences are significant for Classes III, IV and V only. Class I's (males and females combined) lower scores on nurturance may reflect their general feelings of superiority, and the importance they ascribe to status may diminish any feelings of generosity, closeness and even sympathy that they may feel for others *in the abstract.* Their lower scores on nurturance do not mean that they necessarily are lacking in this quality entirely, or that there are not wide individual differences, but rather that this may loom as less important in their psychic makeups, if only because those that they have close, intimate association with, have less need for it.

Males tended to score higher on aggression than females, but this reached statistical significance only for sex comparisons in Classes III and IV. The significant interaction appears to have been obtained because of a reversal of the male superiority in Class V. Here the females show a higher score than did the males, although the difference is not statistically significant. This change in Class V from the general pattern may be due to several factors. First, it is possible that females in Class V are not tutored or encouraged as much as girls in other classes to demonstrate the generally valued feminine timidity and repression of aggression, and thus their scores would tend to fall below those of the males of the same class. Secondly, females in Class V may be more abused and frustrated than females in other classes, and their aggression may be realistically based. Thirdly, and perhaps most

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cogent for these results, is the fact that the EPPS seems to be measuring not so much aggression as verbal aggression. Edwards defines aggression as follows: "To attach contrary points of view, to tell others what one thinks about them, to criticize others publicly, to make fun of others, to tell others off when disagreeing with them, to get revenge for insults, to become angry, to blame others when things go wrong, to read newspaper accounts of violence" (3, p. 5). The form that expression of aggression takes may well change with different classes, and while the EPPS might well measure aggression adequately in those classes that place a high premium on language, it may be less adequate as a measure with Class V persons. In addition, Class V females may tend to be more verbally oriented than the males, particularly if the males are likely to express their aggression physically. The same point may explain why Class V females are more aggressive than other females in our results, and why Class V males appear to be less aggressive than other males. While there undoubtedly are Class V males who are unambitious, detached and resigned simultaneously, they are probably not the most numerous persons in this stratum.

The trait of autonomy is also statistically significant for the interaction between sex and social class and for sex alone, but not for social class. The combined mean for males is significantly higher than that of the females, although statistically significant differences are reached only for Classes III and V. Only in Class I do women score higher than men, although the difference does not reach statistical significance. It is possible that Class I environments may afford the females sufficient security so that she can be more independent and nonconforming in her attitudes than other females. In addition, she tends to have more education, so that she is in fact more adequately prepared to be self-reliant in society at large. These reasons probably also account for the higher scores of Class I females than the females of other classes, although the difference is statistically significant only with Class IV.

Just why males of Class III achieved the highest score on autonomy, differing significantly from males of Classes II and IV, is difficult to understand.

Three traits, deference, order and exhibition, were not significant at all with respect to sex or social class. For three of the remaining traits, achievement (to try to do one's best), endurance (to keep at a job until it is finished), and heterosexuality (to show social-sexual interest in the opposite sex), there was a significant sex difference with males receiving the higher score. For another four traits, intraception (to be sensitive to the motives and feelings of oneself and others), succorance (to want to receive

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a great deal of affection from others), abasement (to accept blame when things do not go right), and change (to want to experience novelty and change in daily routine), there was also a significant sex difference, with females receiving the higher scores. For none of these seven traits was there any significant linkage with social class, something that was especially surprising for achievement, which has been stressed by numerous authors. In fact, the lack of significant linkage suggests either (1) the need for revision of theory concerning the relation of personality and social class, or (2) the inadequacies of the techniques used in this study for assessing the two variables. Edwards defines achievement in the following manner: "To do one's best, to be successful, to accomplish tasks requiring skill and effort, to be a recognized authority, to accomplish something of great significance, to do a difficult job well, to solve difficult problems and puzzles, to be able to do things better than others, to write a great novel or play" (3, p. 5). Perhaps if achievement had been structured in a looser way, more as a function of one's immediate and intimate desires, then different results may have been attained. In addition, there is the possibility that the modern high school student tends to think of achievement more in materialistic terms than the way in which it has been structured on the EPPS. Still further, there may be a tendency to define achievement more in terms of doing what is acceptable to others or in Riesman's (13) "other-directed" individual, than in the way it has been defined here.

All in all then, for three of the traits there was some differentiation with respect to social class, and for an additional two there was an indirect connection with social class. It is always possible that given different instruments there might have been somewhat different results. In addition, the presence of so many university professors in Kent undoubtedly inflated and probably biased the Class I sample since they accounted for nine of the sixteen *S*s, and professors are undoubtedly different from other Class I members in having lower income and fewer material prestige symbols than other Class I persons. Given the limitations of our study, however, we must conclude that there is at least some evidence of differential personality development in the different classes.

F. Summary

One hundred seventy-eight sophomores were evaluated on social class and were administered the EPPS. Analysis of variance revealed that three traits were related to social class—dominance, affiliation and nurturance. The interaction between sex and social class proved to be statistically significant

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for two traits—aggression and autonomy. Of the fifteen EPPS dimensions all but three—deference, order and exhibition—were significant for sex. Given the limitations of our measuring instruments and a slight bias in the composition of the Class I group, we conclude that there is at least some evidence of differential personality development in the various social classes.

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